

VOLK HAN! busts a move on TAMURA! KEN SHAMROCK ! tears MANABU YAMADA! a new one! YAMADA! tears HOTTA! a new one! and other stuff!

Howdy!

WELCOME TO DEATH VALLEY DRIVER VIDEO REVIEW #45! It was a quiet week of tape watching as I worked way too much and my youngster gave me the flu, but I did watch a whole bunch of shoot-style stuff. WOO-HOO! Dig it the most!

-RINGS (4/3/92; 8/94, 3/19/94)-

-RINGS (1/22/97)

These were all sent by one of my main homies, Mike Lorefice, who writes the extensive, exhaustive and incredibly GREAT QUEBRADA which you should read and reread. HELL! Send him a dollar or something! This was the first RINGS I've seen and it was pretty cool. It's a lot different than Pancrase- in that, in general, they use larger stronger Russian and Dutch wrestlers, so I noticed that emphasis was more on power and striking as opposed to the Pancrase norm- speed and matwork. The Big exception is Volk Han who tears everybody up in RINGS because he so great on the mat (sort of a more interesting Ken Shamrock). I'm assuming he's Russian because he has Russia written on his pants in one of the 6 or 7 matches I saw him in. I really loved how incredibly Carney his submission style is- as opposed to going for knee-bars he would go for Indian-Deathlock Kneebars which I was digging the MOST- kinda like all those type of moves Lou Thesz is always yammering about, but never used in his matches because they would break your legs and stuff. In his match against Souvir Govcheu, (a kickboxer who was wearing boxing gloves that rendered him useless on the mat, so you knew how this was going; ((I really hate boxing gloves in a wrestling match, it makes it looked so rigged.:))) Volk used a double-behind-the-back- armbar-into-a-chokeout that would have made Satanico proud in it's preposterousness, except it wasn't a work and it worked so IT RULES even more! As for other folks I dug upon first impression was Dick Vrij who was a freakin killing machine standing up, but was a little lost when he was taken down (sort of a very one-dimensional Bas Rutten). The other big hard charger in RINGS is Tamura but I only saw him in the one tournament from this year. He is also great standing up and REAL flashy and dangerous going into submission holds- flying to the ground for cross-armbreakers to make them look REAL nasty. The best I saw with him was against the aforementioned Volk Han and Golly! that was quite a clash. Tamura would kick the crap out of Volk but Tamara couldn't keep Han from taking him down where Volk would tear him up, so Tamura would work on a submission halfheartedly and hope to get back on his feet and try to knock Volk out. Volk would take a lot of hits and wait to grab his leg and then he take him down and Tamura was simply outclassed. This was kinda like the reverse of the Kondo/Funaki match where the outmatched man tried to keep the eventual winner on the mat, but the strategy is just as obvious, the difference is that Tamura's strategy was actually working for a while as Volk would be on the defensive and couldn't take Tamura down. By the end, the mat technician wins out, as Volk finally gets the single leg knee-bar on him. I still don't like Tamura yet.

The Maeda matches were pretty okay even if they were fixed. Get some of this and see if it's your cup of tea.

-PANCRASE COMMERCIAL TAPES- (7/6/94;7/26/94)-

-KING OF PANCRASE COMMERCIAL TAPE (12/16/94;2/17/94)-

The Pancrase was really good and the main thing I noticed is that Shamrock was so head and shoulder's above everybody else that it didn't matter that he has an incredibly unexciting style. He was the 1986 New York Giants. All he did was win...but did you want to watch it? Hell! It's not a work so Hell yeah! His match against Manabu Yamada (who replaces Juventud Guerrera as the coolest name in professional wrestling) for the King of Pancrase Tourney was the prime example. Shamrock uses his ground game to grind out a win, smothering Yamada in a half-hour ride that kept Manabu on the defensive for the whole match. Shamrock is so technically sound on the mat that there is nothing Yamada could do but lay there and try to stay out of a chokehold. Kinda harrowing in it's length and detail, but worth watching if you're up for it.

The other thing these tapes exposed was the weaknesses of Bas Rutten and especially Minoru Suzuki. Bas Rutten is the best Pancrase has, now that Shamrock is gone, but Shamrock murdalizes him on the 7/26 Commercial tape. Bas can't kick his way out of that one and he is totally outmatched on the mat. The speed and power of Shamrock nullifies all striking edge that Bas would have and Shamrock just balls him up until he can get to the ropes and lose a point. He looks kinda depressed during the match, like he knew it was over from the beginning. On the same tape, Rutten beats the living shit out of Masakatsu Funaki, so it wasn't a total loss. Bas is a lot more complete on other later tapes I've seen.

Minoru Suzuki looks like shit on these tapes. He can't do anything on the mat, he loses concentration at times and his striking isn't impressive. I guess age was catching up with him already. He still looks cool and that's something.:)

-ALL JAPAN WOMEN (1/20/97)-

This was as good as AJW can get and as bad as AJW can get from the crappy youngster match to the good youngster match to the really good Tag Title Match to the infuriatingly suck-ass title match. HEY! Let's go match by match.

~Tanny Mouse/Miyuki Fujii vs Miho Wakizawa/Rumi Sekiguchi: Basic youngster highlight reel- a whole lot of dropkicks and armdrags. Tanny Mouse does this multiple headbutt thing that makes one want to sit her down and say that basing a wrestling career on the headbutt can make it, at the most, as good as Rufus FreightTrain Jones' or as horrible as Tamon Honda's. We'll see next year when they get to do more stuff.

~Mariko Yoshida/Momoe Nakanishi vs Genki Misae/Nana Takahashi: Hey even less! Clipped to the point of indecipherability (if that, indeed, is a word.)

~Rie Tamada/Yumi Fukawa vs Yoshika Tamura/Yuka Shiina: This was neat. I've loved Tamada and Fukawa since the Sugar/Nagashima match, and Fukawa is on the hotstreak of hotstreaks lately (despite the injuries). Tamura did these cool head-scissors suplex things that should be stolen by everyone else immediately. Shiina was pulling up the rear in the match but she still could pan out with the rest of these gals based on other matches that were pretty good. Tamada is as spunky as Fukawa without being as slick in the ring. I was digging this though it was pretty short.

~Yumiko Hotta vs Toshiyo Yamada: This was GREAT! Yamada looked like the bomb in this as she hit two beautiful jumping kicks to the face as Hotta was running the ropes. Hotta- who will REALLY go the extra yard for some folks- leaned into it like a motherf*cker and it looked great. Hotta was- as ever- the queen of stiffness, but Yamada was the story of the match as she looked like she was game for a fight this time around, as opposed to the last couple of these where she looked like the helpless victim of Hurricane Yumika. Very stiff, very good. Yamada looks as good in this as she has looked in AJW so far this year. (She's looked pretty great in all the GAEA she's been in this year.)

~Aja Kong vs Kaoru Ito: This is pretty good. Ito is kinda limited but ya gotta love any wrestler who is tough enough to mix it up with Aja as much as she did. It basically revolved around Ito trying to get the most effective double stomp in. Aja kicks her real hard and stomps her out of spite, hits her powermoves and, of course, sells like Flair in his prime. Ito does her limited repertoire very well and definately deserves all comparisons to being an Izuuka type wrestler- technically sound, flamboyant as oatmeal. Actually works to a hot ending, with Ito pouring on the offense in the final surge (sort of like some yellow boot guy in similar situations:)).

~Manami Toyota/Mima Shimoda vs Tomoko Watanabe/Kumiko Maekawa(WWWA Tag Title): This was damn good. I was surprised. Tomoko Watanabe is so irreversibly linked in my head as a cuter version of Kyoko Inoue that I didn't think I would ever take her seriously, but this match was a good start to putting the cutesy crap behind. Mima- the most beautiful woman in wrestling- is such an AWESOME bitch in this match, flipping off Maekawa and flaunting the belt in front her. The first fall is over in 35 seconds as Tomoko powerbombs the hell out of Toyota three times and gets the quick pin. After that, the workrate goes through the roof as all four are all over the place taking truly hellish bumps and hitting some great spots. Shimoda slaps the young punk Maekawa around and they mix it up pretty good. They did a good job of setting up stuff that would be fleshed out months later as the Shimoda-hates-Maekawa is gonna play pretty good in the U-TOPS vs Abdullah the Shimodas feud thats a brewing. All they need to do is keep Tomoko looking strong and with Hotta and I think they will have salvaged Watanabe's career before it's too late.

~Kyoko Inoue vs Takako Inoue (Title Unification: WWWA Title vs IWA/All Pacific Title): JEEZUS does this suck. Actually it was REALLY great until the last two minutes. Kyoko Inoue, who is too chubbed-out to really fly anymore, does a GREAT job of covering up her slowed workrate by establishing a brilliant scheme of psychology and by selling like Flair in his prime, maybe moreso. Takako Inoue (thinner, no relation)- aside from being the most beautiful woman in

wrestler is really good in this match- also selling like Flair in his prime. The story is that Takako is gonna cheat like a son-of-a-bitch and be an all-around unsportsmanlike jerk and this INFURIATES Kyoko, who at one point- in my favorite part- leaves the ring in despair, since this is turning into a brawl instead of a championship match. Takako hits her with chairs, chokeslams off the apron, suplexes onto chairs, the whole bit and, by the end, Kyoko has this GREAT look of incense, hatred and desperation that more than makes up for anything cute she did in the beginning. By the end Takako is doling out Destiny Hammers left and right. Kyoko ducks one and gets in a batch of offense only to succumb to Takako's merciless onslaught. Takako is hitting more Hammers and Kyoko is on the ropes. This is starting to look Misawa-esque in it's scope of reach on how to come back from a Kawada like beating. Rasmussen starts getting stoked since he was talking smack about Kyoko on the phone before the match starts and now he might be looking at a weird classic, maybe this will....NAHHHH! Kyoko just F*CKIN NO-SELLS THE NEXT DESTINY HAMMER, DOES HER BEST HULK HOGAN/MANAMI TOYOTA HULK-UP, HITS THREE QUICK POWERBOMBS AND WINS! WOO-HOO! God! This sucked cock. Wotta turd. Takako deserved better.

NEXT WEEK! More AJW! AN ASS-LOAD OF GAEA~!

And that Regal/Ultimo Dragon match was the best four minutes of TV this year.

NANIWA~!

Dean Rasmussen, JUVENTUDIZED!